

# Meeting Minutes

Sierra Front - Northwestern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council  
April 29-30, 2008

Carson City Field Office  
Carson City, Nevada

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## **I. RAC Attendance and Welcome**

**9:00 a.m., Tuesday, April 29, 2008 – Meeting Called to Order** by Chairman Gebhardt with the following members of the RAC present.

### **SIERRA FRONT – NORTHWESTERN GREAT BASIN RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL**

<b>COUNCIL MEMBER</b>	<b>RESOURCE/EXPERTISE</b>	<b>TUESDAY 4/29</b>
<b>John Gebhardt – Chair</b>	<b>State Agency</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Patricia Herzog – Vice Chair</b>	<b>Elected Official</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>William Bennett</b>	<b>Transportation/ROWs</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Rochanne Downs</b>	<b>Native Americans</b>	
<b>Brian Doyal</b>	<b>Public-At-Large</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Tim Dufurrena</b>	<b>Nevada Cattlemen</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>James Eidel</b>	<b>Wildlife</b>	<b>Arrived at 10 am</b>
<b>Charles Matton</b>	<b>Wild Horses &amp; Burros</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>John Mudge</b>	<b>Mining</b>	
<b>Ernest Paine</b>	<b>Livestock</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Will Roger Peterson</b>	<b>Recreation</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Steven Siegel</b>	<b>Energy/Minerals</b>	
<b>Sherm Swanson</b>	<b>Academic</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Lee Turner</b>	<b>Environment</b>	
<b>D. Craig Young</b>	<b>Archaeology</b>	<b>X</b>

**BLM staff present** – Gail Givens, Field Manager, Winnemucca Field Office (WFO); Don Hicks, Field Manager, Carson City Field Office (CCFO); Bryant Smith, Associate Field Manager, Carson City Field Office (CCFO); Mark Struble, Public Affairs Specialist, CCFO; Rochelle Ocava, Nevada State Office (NSO); Julie McKinnon, Administrative Assistant, Winnemucca Field Office (WFO).

**Public present** – Richard Hilton, Friends of Sand Mountain Group.

## **II. Summary of Motions Other Than to Approve Minutes**

One motion was made by Sherm Swanson, after Steve Tyron, Libby White, and David Wood from the Las Vegas Field Office, provided a Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) program overview presentation and Round 9 nominations, the RAC will write a letter in support of the preliminary recommendations in Round 9 and the fiscal responsibility for the program.

MOVED: Sherm Swanson  
SECONDED: Charles Matton  
APPROVED: Unanimously

## **III. Summary of Action Assignments**

- 1.) The WFO BLM will research the ruling that says they were authorized to move horses from one Herd Management Area (HMA) to another.
- 2.) Per Jim Eidel's request, Gail will check to make sure the WFO RMP BMP's incorporates the BMP's for sage brush and pinion juniper that were appended to the NCA EIS, since they are applicable. This also applies to the Carson City Field Office RMP.
- 3.) Jim Eidel would like to add illegal grazing around the state to the Tri-RAC agenda, scheduled for November.

4.) Add to the next agenda, difficulty of getting water improvements across the State.

5.) Richard Hilton with Friends of Sand Mountain is to provide the RAC Chairman, John Gebhardt, with a list of items that have changed from the original Plan and a map, agreed to the Friends group and BLM and then the RAC will discuss it with the BLM.

6.) The RAC is going to write a letter to the State Director by June 2, 2008, supporting the SNPLMA preliminary Round 9 recommendations and the programs fiscal responsibility.

## **IV. Minutes from the Meeting in Carson City, Nevada, November 16, 2007**

No changes were suggested.

MOVED – Bill Bennett to approve the minutes.

SECOND – Charles Matton

APPROVED – Unanimously

## **V. RAC Subgroup Reports**

### ***Winnemucca Field Office Resource Management Plan Subgroup***

Sherm Swanson reported that the Subgroup met with the BLM on January to discuss the Draft Best Management Practices (BMP's) and the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's) where they came to an agreement; they have not heard anything since then. The BMP's and SOP's will be an appendix to the document. Gail asked if the Subgroup was expecting to hear back? Sherm replied, no, they are anticipating the release of the draft document in late summer. Gail said the comments they have received have been very positive.

### ***Wild Horse and Burro Standards and Guidelines***

John Gebhardt said he received notification from the State, approved by the State Director, regarding comments that came in on bringing horses from other management areas that do not have viable numbers. By a court ruling BLM can move horses whether there are unviable numbers to other management areas. Charles Matton said at the last meeting they visited the idea of moving or closing HMA's, he said there are horse groups out there that would/could help the BLM. One idea he had was, if an HMA is not over populated, possibly the State Agricultural Department could move their horses onto those HMA's. Gail and others said this was impractical since the State's horses are considered feral, and BLM's are considered wild and free roaming. Tim Dufurrena and Charles Matton will discuss ideas.

### ***Black Rock NCA Implementation Subgroup***

Will Roger Peterson met the new Wilderness Management Plan coordinator from the BLM in which the subgroup was allowed to review the draft management plan, where they made 6 recommendations to the draft. At the next meeting in June, the subgroup expects to see changes made to the draft. In the draft wilderness management plan they are looking at a benefit based recreation management concept for the document. Will said this is the beginning of major dialogue. The subgroup is looking for someone to present the academic perspective. The subgroup was given the opportunity to review the Three-tier reorganization where the group recommended a Wildlife Biologist to be added to the Black Rock Field Office. The subgroup is looking forward to the RAC meeting to be held at Gerlach and Soldier Meadows July 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>.

## **VI. Field Manager Reports**

### ***Winnemucca Field Manager Gail Given's Report***

1. Printed copy of the report was distributed.
2. Gail provided a summary of the printed report.
3. Gail wanted to let the RAC know that Jamie Thompson is retiring, his last day is Wednesday. Mark Struble has been helping the Winnemucca Field Office while they try to fill that position.
  - a. Energy – This continues to be an active program. The statewide geothermal group has been disbanded; each district will handle their own projects. Applications continue to come in.
  - b. Minerals – The Coeur Rochester project is continuing there are some issues and the BLM is talking with Coeur about modifying their plans; possibly moving the focus from the EIS and looking at a separate plan amendment for expansion, due to the price of silver. Plans have continually changed during the EIS process due to the price of silver.
  - c. Lands – We sold approximately 177 acres of land to the City of Winnemucca this year and are actively working on the proposed EA for the next land sale. The SNPLMA acquisition in the Granite Mountains involving approximately 18,000 acres, encompassing three field offices, is moving forward, one of the water rights to be acquired in Wall Canyon has been dropped. There has been some issues to address but Gail is optimistic these will be worked out. For the Round 8 SNPLMA nomination we received funding to work on acquiring two parcels in High Rock Canyon and Poodle Mountain area.

Rights-of-Way – Aqua Trac appealed the State Engineers water rights decision and is working on acquiring more data. Another water pipeline proposal has been submitted which proposes to run from Hualapai Valley through the Black Rock into Fernley and is tied to the Lyon County Lands Bill. We have met with the applicant and they do have the water rights.
  - d. Recreation and Cultural – There are a lot of activities going on.
  - e. Fish and Wildlife – There is nothing out of the ordinary. The Pole Creek EA is out for public review.
  - f. Wild Horse and Burro – We did some gathers last fall. We did a joint aerial census along the western boundary of our district with the Surprise Field office. This census proved to true, they counted 2, 080 wild horses and burros were counted, which is approximately 1,100 head over the high AML of 976. Another area of issue is lacking of funding for gathers this year. Our highest priority is the North Stillwaters which we looked at this spring.

Sherm asked what the RAC can do to support BLM in gathers. Gail replied, he did not think the RAC could do anything outside of a general resolution. John Gebhardt said it is being looked at in the Standards and Guidelines.

- g. Range – We have issued decisions on 5 fully processed permit renewals. We spend a lot of time on protests and hearings in which the time process is lengthy. FOIA are a larger issue, particularly in Range and is overlapping into Fuels.

In January 2008, we impounded approximately 100 head of cattle in the Grass Valley area, East Range, and approximately 100 horses at McDermitt. In conjunction with the Nevada Department of Agriculture BLM sold some of the cows and horses. This impound has made a difference and the Forest Service said they are willing to cooperate and may move forward by issuing citations, retrieving and selling some of the horses. Rochanne asked if the BLM was trying to work with the Tribal council. Gail said yes, on small gathers. The BLM has had positive reaction from the public.

- h. Fire – We did not think we would have any single engine air tankers available to us this year, now we will have 1 maybe 2. We will have the same number of engines as last year. We are in a service agreement with the Santa Rosa Ranger District.
- i. Fuels – There are 6 fuels projects planned for over 1200 acres this year. We are also working in conjunction with Joint Fire Science Project to study various aspects of fire and fire management for 800 acres planned for the UC allotment. Utah State is doing this project as part of the Sage Step Program, where they will test controlled burns, herbicide treatments, and mechanical in 4 - 200 acre rectangle blocks, this test will exclude grazing. We are in the process of doing an EA.

Sherm asked if any of our projects have looked at fall grazing of cheat grass, which gives a long window of opportunity. Gail said not at this time.

- j. ES&R – All ES&R projects are done. We seeded over 47,000 acres. One concern we have this year has been the amount of wind we have had, and how it will affect the seeding for the Thomas Fire.
- k. Wildfire Support Group – This group is up and operating. Sherm asked if, in conjunction with a number of other things, will the ranchers be red carded. Gail said that was one of the original intents; they will be red carded and trained to do suppression work and some pre-suppression work. Most of the rest of the items have not come to fruition. Tim said the original intent was for fire fighting.
- l. Black Rock – Will Rogers – Friends of Black Rock were awarded an FCC FM license for a 9,000 watt radio station for the Gerlach area. The station is proposed to operate 24 hours a day 365 days. Friends of Black Rock hope to do tours and live broadcasting.

- a. Nevada Outdoor School – They continue to help the Black Rock Rendezvous.

- m. Personnel – Our office has a number of people leaving and we are having a hard time getting qualified applicants. James asked if there was a morale issue. Don

replied it is due more to housing and economic conditions. James said he will be rotating off of the RAC council.

### ***Carson City Field Manager Don Hicks Report***

1. Printed copy of the report was distributed.
2. Don Hicks summarized the CCFO report.
2. Don congratulated Brian Doyal for receiving the National Making a Difference Volunteer Winner for public service. He will be flying to Washington for the presentation.
  - a. Fire – Recently, half of the seasonal fire fighters came on Monday, the rest will arrive in June. We will have two Single Engine Air Tankers available, one in Minden and one in Stead.
  - b. Fuels – Three projects are underway, one is the Poorboy prescribed burn in Markleeville, and most of the unit has been burned.
  - c. Wild Horse and Burro – CCFO does not have any gathers scheduled. They are continuing to have problems with the horses drifting off of public land and onto private lands which they are removing. Currently the Snow's holding facility in Fallon has 1900 horses and the Carson City prison has 750. There will be a different model for holding horses. The Palomino facility, in Reno, is a National center, the Fallon facility will be managed out of Reno and will become a processing facility and the Palomino facility will become an adoption area. James asked if horses are brought in from out of state. The answer was, yes.
  - d. Rangeland – We have fully processed 11 permits and hope to fully process 12 this year. We have reached a mediation settlement with Holmgrens; they have paid the first installment of their fine and are back under permit. We see this as a success after almost 10 years. James asked if this was a compromise to the land. We have reduced their AUMs and season of use. Gail said there was a possible ripple effect throughout the State after WFOs impoundment, which was successful. Don agreed that the impoundment set the stage for this settlement to be worked out.

James asked Ernest Paine if the Cattlemen's association had been following this. Ernest replied, yes, but the process is slow and there seems to be a willingness to harass the permittees' because the BLM knows they want to come back. Permittees' can be shut down due to drought conditions. James asked if this was a large problem. Gail replied yes, in our case the allotment was closed. Tim said the BLM has no control if there is not a permit. James asked to have illegal grazing added to the Tri-RAC agenda for November.

- e. Lands Bills – The CCFO is identifying lands without a Wilderness component. Ernest said early on, an aid to the Senator said in order for a Lands Bill to pass it had to have a Wilderness component. Don said Carson City is a stand alone it does not. The Lyon Co. Bill did not have the support, but Mineral Co. is likely to make it through the process. Ernest said he is under the impression that Mineral

Co. is working under the same guidelines as Lyon Co. and at the Mineral County Commissioners meeting they were looking to oppose the bill.

Mineral Co. is looking at 150 acres for the Army Depot to be an integrated training ground because it looks like Afghanistan. Ernest asked if there were maps that showed the area of proposed expansion. Don said they have not seen anything recently, but it is proposed to be south of the highway, surrounding the Aero Jet property.

Ernest mentioned he thought the Lands Bill process was flawed. It is frustrating; they identify the land, and then fix the land, for example, by closing the roads. He feels this will be the end of grazing. Don said BLMs position is to provide Congress with the requested information, and they decide what happens to the land.

James said Clark Co. and Lincoln Co. created Wilderness areas without water rights; what is BLMs status on the acquisition of water rights. Gail said the BLM can only have water rights for Wildlife and Wild Horses and Burros, are not allowed to own water rights.

- f. Conservation Easements – Carson City is continuing work on processing 4 in Douglas County.
- g. Geothermal – This is a big deal; there are 3 companies all within a few square miles and 1 power company.
- h. Rawhide Sale – This sale is expected to take place in the next couple of months.
- i. Wind Energy – We have received 2 applications for full development.
- j. Pine Nut Mountains RMP – The draft is out to cooperators for a 30 day review period; comments are due May 7<sup>th</sup>. After the State Office review, it will go out to the public.

## **VII. Moving to Three-Tier Office Structure**

### Winnemucca Field Office

Gail said the WFO is still moving forward; Nevada is planning to implement the new structure in FY 09 in which both offices are to be up and running as of October 1, 2008. Battle Mountain, Elko, and Ely are currently operating under this structure. Winnemucca, Carson City and Las Vegas still have some things they need to address. One of those is advertising for the Field Manager positions.

### Carson City Field Office

Carson City Field Office is also having the same issues as the Winnemucca Field Office along with financial issues, so we as well are cautious about replacing staff; they are now in position to bring employees back in which case they are looking at bring on two Law Enforcement officers one for Sand Mtn. who would be stationed in Fallon and one for urban interface around Reno. Two new Range folks, one starts next week, and one is out of Oregon who starts the 1<sup>st</sup> of June, it is also in the cue to replace a senior range con. We are also looking at a couple of new

positions a geologist and a surface protection specialist. The Carson City District Office will be split into two geographically located field offices the Sierra Front Field Office and the Stillwater Field Office; we don't know who the managers will be.

Sherm asked why the Eastern resource area was not going to be stationed out of Fallon. Don said at this time it is not financially possible, maybe over the long term. Gail said this has forever been an issue in Nevada, where detached offices should be located.

## **VIII. Sand Mountain Recreation Area Update**

Desna Young, manager for Sand Mountain, provided an update. We are on track from last year; the figures from last year are the same – same monies vs. visitation as last year. She made a guess for the month of March since Easter fell early this year. There are more sales in annual passes which will drop off to more weekly passes. The current challenge is non-holiday management.

Projects implemented this winter, was the trail and sign plan (attached pictures showing the signs) which was funded through the county with Question 1 monies and where seasonal employees were responsible for signs. It went well and they are in place, and the Law Enforcement officers have something to go on.

Monitoring – BLM is in the process of designing a monitoring plan now that the signs are in place. James asked if monitoring included vegetation and what is Dean doing. Don said yes, vegetation monitoring will include and Dean he is diligently working in the west portion of the district and will continue. James said he felt this brought up a problem; Dean has a lot of experience. Don said one thing we are looking at is a mechanism not to send our resource specialist(s) out, and look to contracting; we will still be able to draw from his knowledge he just won't be out there 20 hours a week. James asked what the status of the vegetation data is. Desna said the information is in the system. Rochanne agreed with James; we put all this effort into this project only to have the resources being pushed to the back. Don said we don't have all the answers to whether this organization change is going to work, but we have flexibility, if we need the knowledge of one of our scarce skills resource specialists we will be able to use them throughout the whole district, we just need to give this time to play out.

James said he became aware of the Fish and Wildlife regarding the Sage Grouse is there anything on the Blue Butterfly. The BLM has not seen anything; but a FOIA from Biological Diversity for information on Sand Mtn., but nothing from the Fish and Wildlife Service. Rochanne said there are still concerns about the accuracy of the numbers.

- Richard Hilton, member of the Friends Group of Sand Mountain, was allowed to provide public comment at this time regarding the Sand Mtn. presentation. Mr. Hilton said the Friends group feels disillusioned by the BLM. Both parties had agreed to a plan of action and on a Volunteer Agreement. According to Mr. Hilton, from day one both parties agreed to a lot of terminology and had given up several thousand acres of riding area. When we met at Sand Mtn. for a weekend of clean up the plan changed, it was more restrictive and some routes had changed or been removed. The Friends Group had already paid to have brochures printed with the routes that were originally agreed to and they are now not any good. \* The Chairman asked to provide copies of the original and changed plan along with the map.



**Adjourned for lunch at 11:35**

## **VIII. SNPLMA Round 9 Forum**

Steve Tyron, Libby White and David Wood, from the Las Vegas Field Office are going around to the various RAC group meetings and discussing the Round 9 nominations and about the legislation. The Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) or the Santini Burton Act is the orderly disposal of public lands in Clark County, NV set in 1998 – 2002. Land auctions are the primary source of funding for certain specified purposes. The revenue allocated is 5% to the State, 10% to the Southern Nevada Water Authority, and 85% to the SNPLMA special account. In 2006 they added a Hazardous Fuels Reduction and Wildfire Prevention Program in which they created a 10 year multijurisdictional plan for the State.

Steve provided an overview of all the proposed Round 9 nominations and is asking the RAC groups to provide public comments to the State Director by June 2, 2008.

Rochanne asked Steve how they handle cultural resources when they dispose of land. Steve said they do an Environmental Assessment under NEPA and section 106 consultation if necessary. Sherm asked David if they monitor the remaining vegetation during fuels projects, when we plan future projects we like to know how they worked. David said, right now in the Tahoe Basin they are just getting started, there will be monitoring phase and it is in its preliminary recommendations.

Libby said if anyone wanted more detailed information on any of the projects she would be happy to get that information to you. She explained that Round 5 of the Federal Lands Transaction Facilitation Act (FLTFA) uses the same criteria. Some land if qualified can be purchased out of both funds basically two sources of money.

Gail asked for the Round 8 nomination, Libby said all the electronic binders are on the BLM website.

Steve explained they are trying to manage the SNPLMA program as a work program and not simply a bank; they are audited once sometimes twice a year and approved projects are required to provided quarterly reporting's. There will be a 10 year report out this year.

## **X. Grazing to Reduce Fuel Loading in Carson City**

Ann Bollinger from Parks and Open Space provided a power point presentation on sheep grazing to control cheatgrass, following the Waterfall fire in 2004. In 2006, the State Parks and Open Space group decided to use this method of sheep grazing to use the animals to eat flammable cheatgrass on thousands of acres of public and private land. They are aimed at reducing the cheatgrass. They start the sheep within 1300 ft. behind the homes and work them up the hills. The cheatgrass is only palatable when it is green; once it turns brown they move on the perennial grasses where they are also reducing the height. They are doing some monitoring.

Sherm asked during the monitoring, are perennials prospering. Ann replied, yes in one area it has stimulated the growth. Sherm asked how much economic value is there. Ann said a lot of water had to pass the municipal water storage.

Gail asked if there is any way to track the costs. Ann replied that there is almost no cost. The sheep owner has a window where he doesn't have any place to graze. There is no direct cost of moving the sheep NDF moves them. Gail said this concept is brought up continually, how we can do this on a landscape level that is beneficial to all, and that question has not been answered. Ann said they currently use the sheep where there is urban interface for fuel breaks.

## **XI. Public Comment**

One public comment was addressed under the Sand Mountain agenda item.

## **XII. Meeting Adjourned at 4:00 pm.**

\*Wednesday April 30, 2008, everyone will meet and the Carson City BLM office and travel to Naval Air Station in Fallon where they will receive a tour and briefings on their facility. They will eat lunch on base and then travel to Salt Wells Geothermal Plan Projects east of Fallon for a site visit.

***Next Sierra Front-Northwest Great Basin RAC meeting is scheduled for July 15 – 16, 2008 at Gerlach/Black Rock Desert-High Rock NCA/Soldier Meadows.***